

Sūrah 71

Nūh

(Noah)

(Makkan Period)

Title

Nūh (Noah) is both the title and subject matter of this *Sūrah* for the entire *Sūrah* relates the account of the Prophet Noah (peace be upon him).

Period of Revelation

It is one of the early *Sūrabs* revealed in Makkah. However, the internal evidence of its contents indicate that it was sent down at a time when the Makkan disbelievers' opposition to the Prophet's mission had turned quite intense and bitter.

Subject Matter and Themes

The account of the Prophet Noah (peace be upon him) is not related here only for the sake of recounting his story. Rather, it aims at alerting the Makkan disbelievers that, if they treat the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in the same manner as the Prophet Noah's community had behaved with him, and if they do not mend their ways, they will meet the same end which befell the Prophet Noah's community. Although the

above point is not explicitly made in this *Sūrah*, it is implicit, especially in its circumstantial setting.

The opening verse spells out the assignment God had entrusted to the Prophet Noah (peace be upon him) when he was appointed to this august office.

Verses 2–4 recount briefly how he commenced his mission and the main features of his call. Verses 5–20 recapture the Prophet Noah's narrative, detailing the hardships he encountered during the long course of his preaching. Notwithstanding his best efforts to reform his community, he narrates how he encountered only their stiff and obstinate opposition.

The Prophet Noah's concluding submission features in verses 21–24. He pleads with God that his community has conclusively rejected his call and is under the spell of their chiefs who have manipulated a tremendous plot of deceit and misguidance. Therefore, it is time that they should be deprived of any grace or opportunity to attain divine guidance. This was not any show of impatience by the Prophet Noah (peace be upon him), but an expression of disappointment in that for centuries he had invited them to embrace the truth with great patience and received nothing but humiliating responses. After his utter frustration, he arrived at the conclusion that they were in no way willing to accept the truth. His assessment was fully in accord with divine dispensation. Verse 25 informs that God's chastisement descended on his community as punishment for their misdeeds.

The concluding verses of the *Sūrah* contain the Prophet Noah's supplication which he had made at the time the divine chastisement befell his community. He is seen seeking forgiveness for himself and all the believers. However, he pleads with God not to spare a single disbeliever, for they were completely devoid of any good. If any of them survived, he will beget none but utter disbelievers and sinners.

While studying this *Sūrah*, it will be rewarding to study also the Prophet Noah's account featuring at other places in the Qur'ān, as for example, in verses 59–64 of *Sūrah al-A'rāf*, 71–73 of *Sūrah Yūnus*, 25–49 of *Sūrah Hūd*, 23–31 of *Sūrah al-Mu'minūn*, 15–122 of *Sūrah Shu'arā'*, 14–15 of *Sūrah al-'Ankabūt*, 75–82 of *Sūrah al-Ṣāffāt* and 9–16 of *Sūrah al-Qamar*.